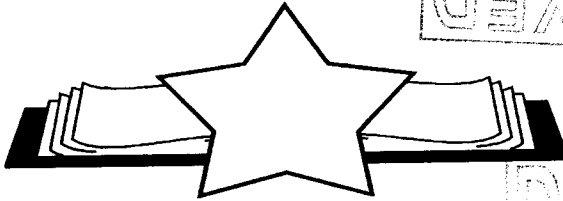


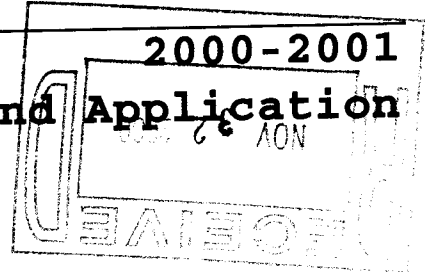
NEW JERSEY

Guidelines and Application

STAR



SCHOOLS



Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 27, 2000

The Star School application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page

County	Somerset		
District (Proper Name)	Hillsborough Township School District		
Address	555 Amwell Road		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	City	Hillsborough New Jersey	08844 Zip Code
Telephone	Fax	908 369 8286	Email www.hillsborough.k12.nj.us
Chief School Administrator	Dr. Robert Gulick		
Nominated School (Proper Name)	Sunnymead School		
Address	55 Sunnymeade Road		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	City	Hillsborough New Jersey	08844 Zip Code
Telephone	Fax	908 575 1459	Email www.hillsborough.k12.nj.us
Principal	Linda M Gross		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	<i>Robert Gulick</i>		

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: ☒ Yes ☐ No County Superintendent's Signature *David Livingston*

NEW JERSEY
STAR SCHOOLS
2000-2001 APPLICATION

RESPONSES to the information below and the statements must be ANONYMOUS. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school or the community. Use the words "the school" in referring to the applicant in the responses to the statements.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Grade Levels K - 5 _____ _____ _____ _____	School Enrollment <u>531</u> Name of the School's Specialization or Whole-School Reform Model <u>Cross Grade Interdisciplinary</u> <u>Instruction</u>
Location: ____ Urban/city; <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban with urban characteristics; ____ Suburban; ____ Small City/Town; ____ Rural		
Previous Star School: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No ____ If Yes, Year(s) <u>1995-96</u>		

KEYBOARDED RESPONSES to the statements below must be **no more than a total of five pages**. Keyboard the statement followed by the response.

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,* that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments.
2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty. Detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.
3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies implemented.
4. Describe the school's overall approach to assessment. How are your methods aligned to the specialization or whole-school reform model? How are you ensuring that the content you are measuring is consistent with the *Core Curriculum Content Standards*? Provide student performance data for the school years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 using state tests and, if you wish, national and/or district standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and/or alternative assessments. Explain any dramatic increase or decrease. Specify which groups, if any, are excluded from the assessments for which you provide data. Give the percentage of students excluded. You may use a chart.
5. Describe collaborative efforts with families, business, the community, school districts, and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement.
6. **Previous Star School Winners Only:** Provide a one-page addendum to your application that describes efforts to expand or replicate the specialization or whole-school reform model within the school and/or the district. Have there been dissemination activities beyond the school or district? If so, please elaborate.

*The May 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.
6appss.20

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments.

Our entire kindergarten through fifth grade school engages in rigorous interdisciplinary instruction that engages ALL students in cross grade learning. The focus of our curriculum is on higher order thinking and creative problem solving skills, through a hands-on/minds-on approach. The school is divided into four family groups, consisting of one class and teacher from each grade level, plus special education, content specialists, and related arts staff. Teachers in each family group meet regularly to plan cross grade, multidisciplinary projects that actively engage students in their own learning.

The school's objectives are:

- To develop the highest academic skills each child can achieve.
- To prepare all students to be productive, successful citizens of the 21st century.
- To provide opportunities for every member of our school community – whether a child or adult – to be both a learner and leader.
- To transfer skills and concepts across curricular content and social arenas.
- To develop higher order thinking and creative problem solving skills.
- To develop our students into life-long learners.

Because the school's family group organization encompasses all grade levels and content areas, family group projects typically address all elementary Core Curriculum Content Standard areas, including NJCCCS 1.4-1.5, 2.1-2.6, 3.1-3.5, 4.1-4.9, 5.1-5.12, 6.1-6.9, and 7.1-7.2. Moreover, our emphasis on integrating technology, higher level thinking and creative problem solving skills, as well as the incorporation of cross-grade cooperative groups, enhances our students' mastery of several Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, including Standards 2, 3, and 4.

The school's fourth grade research project is an excellent example of how our cross-grade interdisciplinary approach to instruction promotes high student achievement and contributes to school-wide accomplishments. For the past two years, one of our school-wide goals has focused on learning about the geography of the United States (NJCCCS 6.7-6.9). Each class in the school studied one eastern state during the 1999-00 school year and one western state for 2000-01. Fourth graders split into small cooperative groups and visited the kindergarten through fifth grade classes within their family groups. The fourth graders developed research questions with their partnered classes and then spent several months researching the answers to the questions posed. They used a broad spectrum of multimedia resources and wrote letters to state tourism offices for additional information. The fourth graders then created multimedia presentations of their research for the other classes in their family group. They practiced public speaking skills while making their presentations, which included the creation of Intranet websites and the display of maps, artifacts, and project boards (Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standards 2,3,4; NJCCCS 3.1-3.5)).

Second and fifth graders from each family group yearly create a joint lighthouse project. Second graders read Keep the Light Burning, Abbie as part of their literature studies and with the help of fifth graders, they research numerous American lighthouses. Fifth graders transfer their studies of electricity and wiring from their science unit by helping their second grade partners design and build working lighthouses. During the course of this joint project, students in both grades conduct research, write poetry in two voices, and learn more about the geography of the

United States, all of which connect to our school-wide geography objective (NJCCCS 3.3-3.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5; Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standards 2,3,4).

At any given time of day, you may find younger and older students tutoring each other, sharing self-authored books, or participating in a jointly designed science experiment. Each of these experiences provides real-life applications of both basic and higher level academic skills. These opportunities involve EVERY student in cooperative learning and service to others. It is especially gratifying to observe a student with significant learning disabilities teach a younger child a new skill, thereby reinforcing his own skills while enhancing his own self-esteem as the younger child eagerly absorbs what is being taught!

2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty. Detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.

Teachers model the school's motto that "We are a community of learners and leaders." Staff members not only engage in the job embedded professional development opportunities found in many districts (graduate coursework, on and off-site professional workshops, continuing education courses, participation on district curriculum committees), but they also have moved their professional development to a higher level. For the past six years teachers have participated in monthly school based professional study groups. During the 1999-00 school year, teachers extended this process and created family groups (see #1) to enhance their teaching skills and student learning across grade and subject areas. Routinely, staff members jointly plan projects, both within their family groups and with their grade level partners. Joint planning time for third through fifth grade teachers with the school's computer resource teacher and library/media specialist ensures the seamless integration of technology across the curriculum and provides rich opportunities to apply the research process within real-life hands-on projects, such as the second and fifth grade lighthouse unit and fourth grade geography studies (see #1).

Moreover, the school's teachers have incorporated non-evaluative peer observations into their professional improvement plans. Instead of the isolation often experienced by elementary teachers, peer observations provide them with an opportunity to learn from their colleagues. By observing peers in other grade levels or areas of specialty, teachers gain a clearer understanding of the developmental organization of the school's curriculum and receive inspiration for new cross grade and cross content instructional projects. They also develop a new respect for and understanding of the challenges that their colleagues face.

Throughout each day at every grade level, the school's teachers engage in the cooperative teaching of lessons. In addition to frequent cross-grade and cross content teaching, basic skills instructors and special education staff teach hand-in-hand with classroom teachers on a daily basis. These co-teaching opportunities provide positive role models for the students' cooperative learning groups and allow teachers to have greater one-on-one instructional time with each child, a practice research demonstrates develops higher levels of achievement among students. The co-teaching model also allows staff to take risks and stretch their professional skills by trying new instructional approaches with the support of their co-teaching colleagues. For example, the introduction of literature circles into our school's literacy program evolved from the research of a staff study group. Teachers in the group then worked with each other to develop a successful implementation plan in their team taught classes. Their initial successes were shared with the

remainder of the staff and now literature circles are an integral part of the school's literacy study units in grades 3 through 5.

3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies implemented.

The school's principal views her role as a facilitator and resource provider for the entire school community. She conducts general monthly staff meetings that include time for professional development, to share ideas and build consensus for program planning and implementation. Teachers as "learners and leaders" conduct their own family group and joint planning meetings. Throughout the school year, quarterly scheduled open-ended parent/principal forums provide parents and community members with a format for discussing any school-related topic of interest to them with the principal. Monthly home and school association meetings provide an additional process for communication between home and school. Both parents and staff members participate in the School Planning Council that devises school-wide objectives, oversees the implementation of action plans, and provides staff training so that school objectives are successfully accomplished.

The school's free after school enrichment program resulted from parent, teacher, and student requests for additional student opportunities to expand their talents. Creative scheduling of related arts staff by the principal provided an extra period of instruction by these specialists after school – at no additional expense to either the parents or school district. ALL students within grade levels are eligible to participate in art classes, select choir, choral groups, computer and technology programs, chess, geometry, and intramural sports.

The school's unique professional development process encompassing study groups, cross-grade/interdisciplinary family groups, and peer observations are additional strategies that result in high academic achievement of students through superior teaching practices at no additional cost to the school district and local taxpayers.

All of these noteworthy student enrichment and professional development programs take place in a district that has the lowest per pupil cost in the county and the second lowest per pupil cost in its district factor grouping in the state of New Jersey.

4. Describe the school's overall approach to assessment. How are your methods aligned to the specialization or whole-school reform model? How are you ensuring that the *content you are measuring is consistent with the Core Curriculum Content Standards*? Provide student performance data for the school years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 using state tests and, if you wish, national and/or district standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and/or alternative assessments. Explain any dramatic increase or decrease. Specify which groups, if any, are excluded from the assessments for which you provide data. Give the percentage of students excluded. You may use a chart.

The school utilizes multiple formal and informal measures to assess student performance, including, nationally standardized testing in grades three and five (ITBS), state criterion referenced testing (NJESPA) in grade four, and district developed criterion and performance measures in grades one through five. Students whom teachers believe are developmentally young are assessed with the Gesell Scale and when eligible and with parental consent, placed in our developmentally appropriate transitional primary class rather than face possible frustration and failure in first grade. All curricula have been aligned with state and national standards. All

criterion referenced assessments, including district-wide evaluation instruments and rubrics, as well as performance assessments, such as portfolios, flow from our curriculum aligned with state and national standards.

Classroom teachers and the principal meet regularly with the school's reading, writing, and mathematics specialists and district curriculum supervisors to review students' progress measured by both these formal and informal assessments. Instructional groupings based on curricular skill and content are adjusted frequently, based upon the regular review of student performance and progress.

Our family group organization exemplifies our emphasis on helping every child achieve his/her maximum potential, since all of the activities emphasize open-ended student participation and responses measured through clearly defined and taught rubrics.

Although the school demographically reflects urban characteristics in a suburban area, our students achieve at high levels as measured on national and state tests (see ESPA chart below). Although scores for special education students have not been included on the chart, these students are assessed and their progress monitored individually according to the requirements of their Individualized Education Plans.

	School	State	School	State
Grade 4 ESPA Results	1999-00	1999-00	1998-99	1998-99
Testing Month	5/00	5/00	5/99	5/99
Total or Composite Score	NA	NA	NA	NA
At or Above Proficient in Three Areas	81.2 %	NA	67.1 %	NA
At or Above Excellent in Three Areas	2.9 %	NA	2.6 %	NA
Total Number Tested	79	NA	91	NA
# of Special Education Student Scores Excluded	10	NA	15	NA
Percent of students excluded	12.7%	NA	16.5%	NA
Number of General Education Students	69	NA	76	NA
Percent Tested (General Ed/Total Number Tested)	87.3%	NA	83.5%	NA
Subtest Scores				
1. Language Arts (Mean Scaled Score)	216.9	NA	210.1	188.23
Standard Deviation		NA		26.82
At or Above Proficient	87.0 %	61.1 %	73.7 %	62.7 %
At or Above Excellent	2.9 %	3.9 %	5.3 %	2.9 %
2. Mathematics (Mean Scaled Scores)	233.2	NA	224.7	214.08
Standard Deviation		NA		34.49
At or Above Proficient	85.5 %	NA	78.9 %	65.7 %
At or Above Excellent	42 %	NA	25 %	18.2 %
3. Science (Mean Scaled Scores)	247.2	NA	244.3	235.73
Standard Deviation		NA		27.40
At or Above Proficient	97.1 %	NA	97.3 %	89.6 %
At or Above Excellent	52.2 %	NA	44.7 %	37.8 %

Similarly, composite scores, mathematics and language arts subtest results for the past two years for the school's third and fifth grades on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills have all been at least one third or more standard deviation above the norm (mean scaled score = 50; standard deviation = 21.06).

5. Describe collaborative efforts with families, business, the community, school districts, and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement.

Parents are viewed as valuable partners in the success and high achievement of each student in the school. Frequent communication between home and school strengthens this partnership. Weekly Friday Folders sent home with every student provide a regular and convenient communication process that is further enhanced through school and class websites, classroom newsletters, email, frequent telephone calls, regularly scheduled conferences, and quarterly developmental report cards. Parents also serve with staff on the School Planning Council that develops and monitors yearly goals for the school and provides training for both teachers and parents to ensure the successful achievement of these goals. Staff members also help parents learn about the curriculum and promote high student achievement by serving as Family Math and Family Science facilitators, leading workshops on testing and instructional programs, and organizing joint school-business presentations for parents, such as a joint project with Microsoft to teach parents how to use the Internet safely and effectively with their children. Parent/principal forums and an active Home and School Association provide other important avenues for collaboration between families and school staff.

Students in the school engage in many service projects that connect classroom studies with real-life learning situations. For example, they have collected books to found a children's library in a local homeless shelter, donated money and household supplies to flood victims, written letters to veterans in a Veteran's Hospital, and raised thousands of dollars in a Math-a-thon for St. Jude's Hospital for Children. Each of these projects directly related to curricular areas and also taught students the value of serving others.

Grants from a school and county business and education partnership, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Principals' Center for the Garden State, and the district's educational foundation have provided the school's staff with training, materials, and funding to enhance the school's educational programs, promote high student achievement, and support student service projects. For example, one business and education partnership grant provided funding to purchase materials for the school's character education program. As a result of this program, behavioral problems during lunch recess decreased 100% as measured over the previous year.

Teachers receive additional training through cooperative partnerships with Princeton University and the College of New Jersey. Teachers then turn key skills to their colleagues and/or incorporate their learning into their instructional programs.

6. Previous Star School Winners Only: Provide a one-page addendum to your application that describes efforts to expand or replicate the specialization or whole-school reform model within the school and/or the district. Have there been dissemination activities beyond the school or district? If so, please elaborate.

The school was previously recognized as a Star School by the New Jersey Department of Education for its integration of thematic learning across content areas. During the past five years, this model of instruction has expanded and evolved into the school's cross grade family groupings (see #1). Not only do teachers collaborate to teach concepts and skills across subject areas within their grade level, they now cooperatively plan and teach important higher order skills across both subject areas and grade levels. Students take an even more active part in constructing their own learning through a multitude of open-ended, hands-on/minds-on learning activities. Moreover, incorporating cross grade activities allows multiple opportunities for students to work with and serve both younger and older students while reinforcing their own skills.

The school's research process, integrating library, technology, and classroom instruction, has been so successfully implemented, that it is now serving as a model for the research process in the district's other six K-5 schools.

Staff members have shared their skills and knowledge of cooperative cross grade and cross content instruction with educators at the national, state and local level. Presentations include workshops for the New Jersey Department of Education, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the New Jersey Science Convention, the Principals' Center for the Garden State, the New Jersey Association of Library Media Specialists, Rutgers University, the College of New Jersey, the Somerset County Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals, and the Somerset-Hunterdon Business and Education Partnership. In addition, presentations about our school's successful teaching/learning model and practices have been made to school boards in two counties, at meetings of the district's curriculum and administrative teams, and to other teachers in the district during professional development activities.

The school's staff and community of students and parents are proud that we have not only had the opportunity to disseminate information about our successful school practices, but also that we have expanded upon the original idea of themed, cross content instruction, to include an even more powerful and successful model of instruction based upon cross grade family groups.